

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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SUBJ:

THE ARABS IN EYES OF ISRAELIS

REF: CAIRO 3042

1. WHILE WE HAVE NOT HAD OPPORTUNITY IN PAST FEW DAYS TO LEARN PRIVATE VIEWS OF ISRAELI LEADERSHIP ON SUCH MATTERS, THOSE ISRAELIS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN, INCLUDING ISRAELI MILITARY OFFICERS, SEEM TO BE EXPERIENCING SOME CHANGES IN ATTITUDE TOWARD ARABS WHICH IS PARALLEL TO GROWING EGYPTIAN SELF-CONFIDENCE VIS-A-VIS ISRAEL DESCRIBED IN REFTEL. FOR EXAMPLE, THESE ISRAELIS ARE SAYING THEY MUST RETHINK THEIR PREVIOUS ASSUMPTION ABOUT ARAB CHARACTER, COURAGE, ABILITY TO LEARN MODERN TECHNOLOGY, AND CAPACITY FOR PLANNING, COORDINATION, AND KEEPING OF SECRETS. THEY ARE IMPRESSED BY EGYPTIAN-SYRIAN STRATEGY AND WAR EFFORT SO FAR.

2. THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY BODE WELL FOR FUTURE MIDDLE EAST PEACE EFFORTS. OUT OF ITS NEWLY GAINED RESPECT FOR ARAB MILITARY PROSESS, ISRAELMAY BE STILL MORE CONCERNED ABOUT SEEKING ENLARGED BORDERS THAN BEFORE. BUT CHANGED ISRAELI ATTITUDE COULD, AT LEAST IN ONE SMALL RESPECT, HELP: ISRAELI REFERENCES TO ARABS
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IN FUTURE WAY OMIT NOTE OF CONDESCENSION OCCASIONALLY PRESENT IN PAST.

3. THESE ISRAELIS HAVE ALSO BEEN WATCHING CAREFULLY EGYPTIAN AND

SYRIAN DESCRIPTIONS OF WAR AIMS. THEY HAVE BEEN INTERESTED IN OCCASIONAL HINTS (C.F. FBIS KYRENIA 081013Z OCTOBER: TEXT OF SYRIAN RADIO APPEAL TO ISRAELI TROOPS) OUT OF CAIRO AND DAMASCUS THAT OBJECTIVE IS NOT DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL BUT ONLY LIBERATION TERRITORIES ISRAEL OCCUPIED IN 1967. (OUR CONTACTS HAVE ALSO NOTED THAT GOE WAR REPORTS HAVE BEEN CALMER AND ALTHOUGH CONSIDERABLY EXAGGERATED AT LEAST, MORE FACTUAL THAN IN 1967.) THESE ISRAELIS TEND TO DOUBT ARABS HAVE HAD CHANGE OF HEART ON QUESTION OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST, BUT THEY ARE STRUCK BY POLITICAL SOPHISTICATION LYING BEHIND SUCH MODERATE ARAB APPROACH, AND THEY ALLOW THEMSELVES TINY BIT OF HOPE THAT ARABS HAVE BECOME MORE REALISTIC ABOUT POSSIBLE PEACE SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL.

4. AS IN CASE OF EGYPTIAN MOOD DESCRIBED IN REFTEL, ISRAELI ABILITY AT THIS MOMENT TO LOOK AT ARABS WITH NEW RESPECT MAY BE FLEETING, SINCE WARS CAN SO CHARGE ATMOSPHERE WITH EMOTIONS, ESPECIALLY IF CIVILIAN TOLL MOUNTS.

5. USINT CAIRO HAS SUGGESTED (REFTEL) THAT NEWLY SELF-CONFIDENT EGYPT MIGHT EVEN BE ABLE TO FACE ISRAEL DIRECTLY IN NEGOTIATIONS, HAVE PROVEN ITSELF IN ITS OWN EYES BY SEIZING BARLEV LINE. IF EGYPT WHILE STILL IN POSSESSION OF BARLEV LINE SHOULD COMMUNICATE OFFICIALLY TO ISRAEL A READINESS TO ENTER INTO DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS, THIS OF COURSE WOULD HAVE IMPACT ON GOI, BUT IT IS VERY HARD TO GUESS HOW MUCH. IT IS TRUE THAT BEFORE THIS WAR STARTED THERE WERE THOSE IN ISRAEL, EVIDENTLY INCLUDING DAYAN, WHO WERE SPECULATING ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF RENEWED ISRAELI EFFORT TO REACH INTERIM AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT UNDER WHICH EGYPT WOULD PLACE MILITARY FORCE EAST OF CANAL AND ISRAEL WOULD WITHDRAW ITS FORCES TO EASTERN SINAI. I AM AFRAID, HOWEVER, FACTS THAT (A) ISRAEL WAS VICTIM OF SURPRISE EGYPTIAN ATTACK OCTOBER 6 AND (B) ISRAEL HAS SUSTAINED HEAVY HUMAN LOSSES AS RESULT OF THIS MAY HAVE CHANGED THE BALLGAME.

6. IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL, BUT OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT EFFECT OF
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WAR ON ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION RE OVERALL TERRITORIAL ISSUE HAS BEEN, SO FAR, TO REINFORCE BOTH MODERATES AND HARDLINERS IN THEIR PREEXISTING VIEWS. THERE ARE INDEED VOICES SAYING WAR HAS PROVED THAT 1967 CEASEFIRE LINES WERE NOT REALLY SECURE AND THAT ISRAEL'S ATTITUDE ON TERRITORIAL QUESTION IN RECENT YEARS WAS WRONG. FOR EXAMPLE, BLOCH, A JOURNALIST GENERALLY RECOGNIZED AS DOVISH, WROTE IN DAVAR OCTOBER 10 THAT ONE OF MANY MYTHS EXPLODED BY WAR WAS IDEA THAT 1967 CEASEFIRE LINES WERE MUCH EASIER TO DEFEND THAN 1948 ARMISTIC LINES; ALTHOUGH POPULATIN CENTERS WERE FURTHER FROM 1967 LINES THAN THEY WERE FROM 1948 LINES, BLOCH WROTE THAT THIS HAD BEEN OFFSET BY CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT IN WEAPONS AND ADDED THAT ISRAELI POLITICATIONS IN RECENT YEARS WERE STILL WAGING PALESTINIAN

JEWS' CAMPAIGNS OF THE 1930S IN THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD TERRITORIAL
ISSUE. BUT MOST VOICES WE HAVE HEARD ARE SAYING THE OPPOSITE,
AND SINCE HARDLINERS ON THIS SUBJECT FAR OUTNUMBERED MODERATES
ON EVE OF WAR, WE SUSPECT THAT IF ANYTHING THEIR NUMBER IS MUCH
GREATER TODAY.

7. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, TENDENCY IN ISRAEL WILL PROBABLY
BE TO INSIST ON DRIVING EGYPTIANS BACK ACROSS CANAL AS MATTER
OF PRINCIPLE. MUCH WOULD DEPEND ON CIRCUMSTANCES AND NATURE OF
ANY EGYPTIAN MESSAGE: PUBLICUNAMBIGUOUS EGYPTIAN DECLARATIONWOULD
OF COURSE HAVE GREATER IMPACT THAN MESSAGE THROUGH THIRD PARTY.

8. ONE THING SEEMS CLEAR: IF EGYPTIANS WERE TO CONVEY
READINESS FOR TALKS TO ISRAEL, AND IF AT THAT TIME ISRAEL SHOULD
BE SERIOUSLY TIRING IN ITS WAR EFFORT, EGYPTIAN MESSAGE TO ISRAEL
MIGHT CONCEIVABLY CHANGE SITUATION ENTIRELY AND WOULD BE WORTH
A TRY.
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